



TESTIMONY ON MICHIGAN H.B. 4300
Presented by Vicki Deisner, Midwest Legislative Director
Before the Michigan Criminal Justice Committee
Wednesday, May 15, 2013

Chairman Heise, Majority Vice-Chair Graves, Minority Vice-Chair Oakes and distinguished members of the House Criminal Justice Committee, I am Vicki Deisner, the Midwest Legislative Director for the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA). The ASPCA, founded in 1866, is the first humane organization established in the Americas and serves as the nation's leading voice for animal welfare. The ASPCA's mission is to provide effective means for the prevention of cruelty to animals throughout the United States. As part of our national effort to assist local anti-cruelty efforts on the ground the ASPCA provides grants to local communities. In fact, over the last several years we have awarded over \$600,000 to communities throughout Michigan. On behalf of our approximately 2.5 million members and supporters, including over 73,000 Michigan citizens, we **respectfully urge the House Criminal Justice Committee to vote YES on H.B. 4300 – a bill that would prohibit primates as pets**. Primates are wild animals, even if bred in captivity and hand-raised by humans. Keeping primates as pets threatens public health and safety, as well as animal welfare.

Risk to public safety. While infant primates may seem cute and cooperative, they inevitably grow stronger and more aggressive. Chimpanzees are much stronger than humans, and even small monkeys can inflict serious harm by biting and scratching. Removing a primate's teeth, as many pet owners do, is cruel and no guarantee against injury. At least 160 people – including 53 children – have been injured by primates since 2000, such as the 6-year old Trenton girl who had to undergo testing after being bitten by someone's Java macaque while the animal was being walked on a leash outdoors. The 2009 incident in Connecticut in which a chimpanzee attacked and severely injured a woman tragically illustrates that nonhuman primates should not be kept as pets.

Risk to public health. Nonhuman primates can spread diseases that pose serious health risks to humans, including Herpes B and tuberculosis. Most macaque monkeys naturally carry the deadly Herpes B virus, for example. Research published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) concludes that the health risks make macaques unsuitable as pets. In Canada, people who work with monkeys cannot donate blood because of the potential risk of Simian foamy virus, a retrovirus, as well as other as yet unknown diseases.

Risk to animal welfare. Nonhuman primates kept in captivity need housing in very large enclosures, companionship of other nonhuman primates, and a stimulating environment – in short, the kind of environment provided by their natural habitat. The average pet owner cannot meet these needs. A chimpanzee who becomes too difficult to handle at age eight might live another 50 years. There are few options for placing these animals. These social, intelligent animals may end up confined to small cages or sold to substandard menageries.

State action is needed. At least 24 states have passed legislation to prohibit keeping primates as pets, and federal health regulations prohibit importing primates into the United States for the pet trade. Still these animals are readily available for sale from breeders and even over the internet. Michigan appropriately prohibits big cats, bears and wolf hybrids as pets. The state should add primates to the list before another person is injured or killed.

For all of these reasons, the **ASPCA respectfully urges the House Criminal Justice committee to say YES to H.B. 4300**. Thank you for your time and consideration.

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